



Week of Feb. 4 – Feb. 10, 2009

National African American History Month

Each February, the nation recognizes National African American History Month to highlight the triumphs and contributions African-Americans have made to the nation's cultural and political landscape.

The first celebration to commemorate the contributions to the nation made by people of African descent occurred Feb. 12, 1926. For many years, the second week of February was set aside for this celebration. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, the week was expanded into Black History Month. Now the nation marks February as National African American History Month.

Some other African-American history facts:

- Frederick Jones, an African-American, held more than 60 patents -- most of them dealing with refrigeration. His portable air conditioner was used in World War II to preserve medicine and blood serum
- The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African-American pilots in the U.S. armed forces. Beginning in 1941, groups of extensively tested and rigorously trained African-Americans received flight training at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama
- Elijah McCoy invented an automatic lubricator for oiling steam engines in 1872. The term "the real McCoy" is believed to be a reference about the reliability of Elijah McCoy's invention
- George Carruthers invented the far ultraviolet electrographic camera, used in the 1972 Apollo 16 mission. This invention revealed new features of Earth's far-outer atmosphere and deep-space objects from the perspective of the lunar surface. Carruthers was inducted into the National Inventor's Hall of Fame in 2003

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